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SUBJECT: VIETNAM APPROVES OF U.S.-SINGAPORE STRATEGIC
FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT

Reftel: STATE 125837

1. (SBU) Poloff delivered Reftel talking points July 11 to Hoang Xuan Hai, Section Chief in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Asia II Department. Defense Attache delivered the same points July 12 to Senior Colonel Nguyen Quang Bieu, Section Chief in the External Relations Department of the Ministry of National Defense (MND).

2. (SBU) The MFA's Hai told Poloff that the MFA highly appreciates the courtesy of an advance notification of the signing of the SFA before its public announcement. The GVN supports the signing of the Framework Agreement and sees it as a positive development if it genuinely promotes peace and security in the region. "We don't want outside forces to set up bases in the region," he said, "but this kind of framework is positive."

3. (SBU) MND officers were noncommittal but curious. In response to Senior Colonel Bieu's question, DATT explained that the SFA is not a treaty. Later, Lt. Colonel Nguyen Quang Vinh, United States Desk Officer at the Ministry of Defense, asked Poloff to clarify if the signing of the SFA represented an elevation in Singapore's relationship with the United States relative to other countries in the region. Poloff explained that Thailand and the Philippines remain the only countries in ASEAN who have treaty alliances with the United States.

4. (SBU) Comment: The GVN approves of the SFA because it represents continued U.S. security engagement in the region without the commitment of visible and potentially politically sensitive U.S. troops or forces. This is the best-case formula for Vietnam. The advance notification was also perceived as demonstrating U.S. goodwill towards Vietnam and reflecting the improved bilateral climate after the Prime Minister's successful trip to Washington. End Comment.

MARINE